

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO COMMERCE COMMITTEE
March 5, 2009

Karen J. Senich, Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

Testimony Supporting

Governor's Bill 6369

AN ACT CONCERNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

Senator LeBeau, Representative Berger and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee: my name is Karen J. Senich and I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, whose mission is to preserve and promote all of Connecticut's cultural and tourism assets in order to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of the state. I appreciate the opportunity to testify Governor's Bill 6369 - An Act Concerning Economic Development and Job Creation.

Bill 6369 would merge the Commission on Culture & Tourism, with its four divisions, into the Department of Economic and Community Development. The merger seeks to make the state more responsive to business, including the business of arts, film, historic preservation and tourism. The combined agency - including the programs of DECD, CCT & OWC - can then work to create the jobs which naturally arise from the culture and tourism industries. The single agency can become the single point of contact to help these industries grow and thrive.

Connecticut's arts, cultural, heritage and tourism organizations contribute greatly to the state's economic vitality. Annually, these organizations contribute over \$14 billion to our economy and account for over 170,000 jobs, 10% of our labor force. These organizations, institutions and individuals and our unique history which is, at times, told through structures and land enrich our lives and define our quality of life in Connecticut - they make Connecticut an exciting, unique, relaxing and all around great state in which to live. Our quality of life keeps people and business in the state and draws people and business to the state.

We believe that this proposal will allow Connecticut to continue to stabilize and grow its economy while continuing to preserve and promote our cultural and tourism assets.